

7s/ Warren A. Henderson

**THESE**

In your letter to me of October 8, you indicated that the FY 1961 Air Force budget involves substantial reductions in U.S. NATO-committed squadrons during 1960. We understand that this may mean elimination of 14 out of 48 U.S. NATO-committed squadrons. Such U.S. action, when combined with other factors adversely affecting the NATO Alliance at this time, can well provoke a general deterioration in the Western defense posture.

Best, as ever,

Christina A. Bortor

**Enclosure:**

Copy of memorandum  
for the President

Clearances:

RA - LMr. Tuthill  
Mr. Magill  
EUR - Mr. White  
S/S -

The Honorable  
Thomas S. Gates, Jr.,  
Acting Secretary of Defense.

EUR/RA:RFessenden:cnc  
10/12/59

**SECRET**

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By CRK NARA Date 2/14/90

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Category "A"

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757 Warren A. Henderson

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**Subject: Effect on Disarmament and Berlin  
Negotiations of Reduction of U.S.  
Forces Committed to NATO**

I understand that the proposed FY 1961 Air Force budget involves the withdrawal during 1960 of 14 of the 48 U.S. Air Force squadrons currently committed to NATO. This major cutback in U.S. forces committed to NATO, if approved, would have to be made known to our NATO allies promptly.

I understand that this plan reflects the view that limited Air Force budgetary resources should be devoted to the ICBM program and that the tactical strike forces must be correspondingly reduced. Thus it reflects not only budgetary considerations, but also major policy considerations.

Such U.S. reductions would have a major adverse impact on NATO. Our Allies will link these reductions with the prospective heavy cuts in the military aid program for NATO and assume that there is in process a major shift in U.S. policy toward a drastic revision of our commitments to Europe and reliance on a "Fortress America" concept. This belief, coupled with the current tendency in some circles to believe there is a real "detente" justifying a relaxation of the Western defense posture, could well produce a chain reaction deterioration in the whole NATO defense posture.

I believe that the most important and over-riding factor in this is the potential effect on the Soviets in the disarmament negotiations. If we, and the NATO alliance generally, engage in "unilateral" disarmament before or during the new round of disarmament negotiations, we will almost certainly prejudice any chance we may have of success. Dismantling of Western defense is bound to be interpreted by the Soviets as a sign of weakness, not as willingness to reach an agreement. we

would

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would in effect be giving away our bargaining position in advance. Any necessary reductions in our forces should be made, in my view, only after and possibly as a part of a disarmament agreement with the Soviets, not prior to the negotiations.

I also believe our position will likewise be seriously compromised in any negotiations of a Berlin settlement if we were to take unilateral steps now towards cutting back our strength in Europe.

In addition to these two basic considerations, I should also point out that there are at present various strains on the NATO Alliance which would certainly become much more acute if there were to be major withdrawals of U.S. units. De Gaulle's nationalistic attitudes, British efforts to change basic NATO strategy, and potential shortfalls in meeting minimum force requirements can result in a feeling of general discouragement about the effectiveness of NATO defenses and increase any latent tendency to reach an accommodation with the Soviets which would be inimical to our interests.

Christian A. Herter

Clearances:

RA - Mr. Tuthill } R7  
          Mr. Magill }  
EUR - Mr. White } IDW  
          S/S -

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